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WHAT DOES MODERN PSYCHOLOGY PERMIT US TO BELIEVE IN RESPECT TO REGENERATION?

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The occasion for this question is found in the recent growth of two closely related movements—the psychological analysis of religious experiences, and the demand for improved religious education. Neither of these movements had attained much headway a decade ago, yet today they are present to the consciousness of a large part of the American church. The reception given to them speaks for the church's sense of reality, and for its hospitality toward new points of view. For both these movements tend to reverse long-accepted notions of the Christian life. Experiences concerning which the church has insisted that "thou knowest not whence it cometh" are now described as coming in definite ways, like other mental phenomena. The agitation for religious education, likewise, rests upon a notion of the naturalness of religious growth that is inconsistent with the assumption that genuine Christian life must begin with conversion.

It is not to be supposed, however, that all truth that has been accepted has been assimilated. Intelligent and liberal-minded pastors sometimes make reservations with reference to religious education, lest it substitute education for regeneration. What is needed in religion, some declare, is not the mature mind, but the regenerated mind. Others, accepting the facts of psychology and the principles of education, ask what remains of the doctrine of regeneration. What, then, does psychology permit us to believe on this point?

For the form of this question the present writer does not hold himself responsible. He seeks merely to express thereby what seems to be a prevalent attitude of mind in large circles of Christian believers. A man of science, writing from his own standpoint, would hardly ask, "What am I permitted to believe?" but rather, "What are the facts, and what inferences can be drawn from them?" It is somewhat startling, indeed, to be asked what beliefs psychology *permits* Christians to entertain. For why should our beliefs trail at the heels of science? But, instead of moralizing on the origin of the question, let us undertake to answer it just as it comes to us from the people. Postponing for the present all formal analysis of our problem, and fixing attention upon the more obvious interests of the plain people, we may say at once that the popular belief that profound and permanent changes of character may take place suddenly; that likes and dislikes may thus be revolutionized, and that the whole may occur with little or no sense of effort, so that even persons of weak and perverted will may be set right and kept right—this belief, so dear to the evangelical heart, is strengthened, on the whole, by psychological study. The facts were known, of course, before the psychologist took a hand, but impressiveness has been added to the facts by freeing them from their setting of tradition and popular impressionism, and by recording them in the more accurate language of science.

On the other hand, careful study fails to support the notion that such a change is within the reach of all. We observe that revivalists almost invariably overlook the negative cases that occur in revival meetings, that is, the persons who diligently but vainly seek for the phenomenon that is popularly understood to be regeneration. The negative cases are, in truth, abundant, and the evidence concerning them shows that the negative results are not due to some unfulfilled condition of either belief or moral attitude. It is just as impossible that all persons should experience this transformation as that all should write sonnets or paint portraits. If, on the other hand, the term regeneration is made broad enough to cover the experiences of all persons who are recognized as Christians, then regeneration has no specific mark of its own whereby it can be discriminated from other advance steps in Christian character.

These two statements have two practical consequences. In the

first place, there is *prima facie* ground for defending the use, in certain cases, of evangelistic methods that look toward sudden and profound upheavals of the mind. But, in the second place, there is imperative ground for the careful limitation of such methods, and for the general use of methods that look to more deliberate and controlled reactions. Confirmed drunkards as a class present a field in which the former method seems to be justified. The reason therefor is found in the same traits of the drunkard's mind that enable "Keeley cures" and specialists in nervous diseases to overcome the drink habit by suggestion. But, just as the general health of the community is maintained primarily by physiological forces that act spontaneously, and not by medical treatments, so the religious health of the generality of men is to be secured through the action of a normal intelligence and a deliberate will.

Passing now from these popular and practical phases of our question to the deeper theoretical considerations involved in it, we may ask at what points the accepted notions of modern psychology tend to affect the theory of regeneration. But first it should be said that psychology does not directly teach anything with regard to God. Whether God exists, whether he is graciously inclined toward sinners, and whether our Christian impulses in some way come ultimately from him, are questions outside the scope of a strictly empirical science. It is only when the doctrine of regeneration asserts that some event occurs within the realm of actual observation that psychology becomes at all involved.

The main points at which such psychological questions arise are these: First, the asserted contrast between a natural state of depravity and the regenerate state; second, the asserted discontinuity of regeneration with other mental processes; third, the significance of the fact of regeneration for Christian apologetics. The first of these points is found in all the orthodox Protestant creeds. Whether regeneration is thought of as occurring at baptism in infancy, or only in connection with repentance, and whatever its relation to the sacraments, to the intelligence, or to the individual will, the intended meaning of regeneration is a passage from a natural state of moral defect and helplessness to a state of moral health and efficiency. The second point is almost universally assumed or asserted in these

creeds. It is involved, in fact, in the contrast between the state of nature and the state of grace. Nothing can well exceed the clearness and emphasis with which regeneration has been asserted to be a creative act, an infusion of new life in the strictest sense of the term, an event not to be included in any explanatory way within the series of antecedents and consequents that make up the natural life of the mind. The third of our three points is not derived directly from the creeds, but from the usage of certain theological writers who maintain that some of the essential doctrines of Christianity can be proved partly or wholly from observable facts of Christian experience. This empirical apologetic rests, in most cases, almost exclusively upon the asserted fact of regeneration, together with a group of accompanying or subsidiary facts. The basis of the argument is therefore psychological, so that its proper success depends upon the soundness of its psychological analysis.

First, *Does psychological observation discover any such contrast as is alleged to exist between the natural and the regenerate mind?* In the opinion of the present writer, religious teachers have never adequately weighed the oft-repeated criticism made against Christians that, in spite of all their claims, they are not so very unlike other persons, after all. For such teachers have usually assumed that the whole force of the criticism is overcome if only it can be shown that Christians as a whole are better than the world's people, or else that in individual cases virtues blossom in the Christian life that are unknown outside it; whereas a deeper problem commonly underlies the criticism. The problem is whether the process of the moral life is essentially different in the case of a Christian from what it is in the case of the "merely moral man." It is as if a morally earnest man outside the church should say, "I aspire, struggle, partly attain, and partly fail; what more can you say for yourself?" If the theory of regeneration is correct in its contrast between the state of nature and the state of grace, we ought to be able to pick out the regenerate individuals by some external or internal mark. That they cannot be discovered by any external mark is too obvious to need argument. On the other hand if the mark is internal, it should be possible to state wherein the mental process of the regenerate man, when he deals with the moral problems of life, is different from that of the

unregenerate. Here, again, we find no dividing line whatever. The man who claims to be regenerate must employ his understanding to discover what is right, and also the best means of attaining goodness; he must make choices, form habits, resist impulses, criticize his conduct, seek social support and co-operation, precisely as his neighbor does who is not regenerated.

The common rejoinder, that the Christian has peculiar sources of help upon which he can draw, such as prayer and communion with God or with Jesus fails to meet the case that we are considering. For, again, there is no external test whereby we can discover which individuals have received such help, and further, there are exceedingly few instances, comparatively, in which this special kind of help enables one to dispense with the same study-and-struggle processes that the unregenerate man employs. To say that only the few who have been lifted above this struggle have been genuinely regenerated would be too costly for the theory itself.

Nor is the difficulty overcome by the fact that disciples of Jesus, all in all, reach a higher moral plane than other persons or other religions. The simple fact of being the highest in a series surely does not remove one from the series, or establish any such contrast as that between "state of nature" and "state of grace." Further, it is the constant effort of the body of Jesus' disciples to be better disciples. Shall we say, then, that Christians are regenerate or that they are striving to be regenerated?

Comparing Christians with others, then, a psychologist will find no such contrast between the natural and the regenerate mind as the theory alleges. If he arranges in a serial order all persons whom the moral judgment of Christians themselves recognizes as having attained moral control, purity, sweetness, and Christlike virtues, he finds side by side at all steps in the series those who lay hold upon the promise of regenerating grace, and likewise those who do not; and if he examines the mental process whereby they have attained their moral position, he finds it substantially the same in all except the few who have had the extraordinary experiences already referred to.

There is, in the next place, no empirical evidence that mankind is or ever was in a condition of complete moral helplessness or depravity. Not so very long ago the faults of little children were adduced as

evidence of natural depravity. In particular, children's "lies," which are so natural and oftentimes obstinate, seemed to reveal the depth of the iniquity of the unregenerate heart. A little analysis of the processes of the child-mind, however, completely discredits this interpretation. We can see just how the falsehoods of children arise, and just what such falsehoods mean to the children themselves. The same is true of other childish traits, such as selfishness and cruelty, not one of which, in the spontaneous form in which it appears in young children, is a sign of badness or perversity. On the other hand, as Bushnell remarked in *Christian Nurture*, children spontaneously manifest, in advance of instruction and of special religious experiences, various beautiful qualities, particularly love. Such qualities, according to Bushnell, should be interpreted as a sign of divine grace present in the child, so that natural depravity is, as a matter of fact, counteracted from the beginning of life. This view recognizes facts, but in doing so it takes refuge in a remarkable theory. For now depravity or moral helplessness is not predicated of any actual human being in infancy, but only of human nature as such, or conceived by itself apart from the divine grace that is, in fact, in every case imparted. Some persons are so tenacious of the theory of depravity as to hold that regeneration may come at birth, or even before birth, so that, though the child is never really alienated or lost, it is, nevertheless, a victim of depravity. Obviously every such theory pushes regeneration out of the moral sphere and reduces it to an essentially magical performance upon the child. Further, it puts regeneration, in every such case, totally outside the sphere of scientific observation.

As far as observation of present conditions can show, therefore, there is no reason for asserting the natural moral helplessness or depravity of all human beings, or of any of them. There is moral immaturity, and there is necessity of moral effort and struggle; but there is also capacity for moral growth; and moral effort and struggle are as natural as human society itself. Nor is there reason for supposing that the childhood of the race differed in this respect from the childhood of the individual. Everything that we know of the beginnings of humanity indicates that the roots of moral capacity are identical with the roots of human nature itself. At no point do we find moral capacity entering into the race, or, for that matter,

departing from it. There is, in short, no historical ground for affirming the contrast in question. As a race, and as individuals, we have what Lowell calls "the climbing instinct." We are like children who are learning to walk; there is ahead of us a more mature and satisfactory mode of moral life, and there is within us an impulsion toward it; we stagger and stumble and bruise ourselves; our wills become in some cases perverse; but it is natural to try to walk, and no man can properly be described as morally helpless unless either he is morally imbecile or lunatic, or else he has degraded himself by his own repeated evil choices.

Second. *Can psychology entertain the notion of discontinuity between the natural and the regenerate state?* The considerations already advanced tend to discredit the notion that in the life of the Christian there occurs an infusion of new life that is entirely discontinuous with his past life and with the ordinary processes of consciousness. Nevertheless the belief in such discontinuity deserves an examination on its own account.

This belief is supposed to rest upon the authority of Scripture, so that, though we at this day might not be able to point out an instance of the supposed discontinuity, the fact would still remain adequately authenticated. Yet it would seem, first of all, rather useless to offer evidence that a certain religious experience occurred to somebody in past ages unless we can ourselves repeat that experience today. Why should I care whether God entered creatively into the life of patriarch or prophet or apostle, or even Jesus himself, unless that fact is a sure sign that God is ready to enter into my life in similar creative fashion? Further, any inability of ours to enter into the religious privileges of these historic characters inevitably weakens our belief that these characters themselves enjoyed the supposed privileges. In a word, unless revelation is continuous, the belief in revelation must tend to perish as the facts move farther and farther into the past.

But to admit the continuity of revelation is equivalent to incorporating revelation into our notion of natural process, for the notion of the natural is precisely that of the recurrence of similar events under similar conditions. As a matter of fact, the practical teaching of the evangelical churches has commonly assumed or even asserted that the Scripture revelation can be verified in our own experience.

Further, this teaching has laid stress upon definite conditions under which alone it is said that such experience occurs. Indeed, the conditions have been so successfully observed, that each of many sects, and even subdivisions of sects, has built up a technique whereby particular experiences are evoked with some approximation to regularity. The revival churches have all adopted a general technique for securing repentance and faith; Methodists have known how to produce the "witness of the Spirit;" the "holiness" movement has successfully produced a sense of being free from all inborn depravity; at various centers in the United States, Europe, and India at the present time, the "baptism in the Spirit," manifested by the gift of tongues, is successfully propagated. In every one of these churches on other groups the assumption is made that the desired experience depends upon definite antecedents. But this implies that it is included in the general system that is called nature.

The difference between these religious bodies at this point and the psychologists, if there is any difference, lies in the degree of consistency and rigor with which they respectively apply this principle. Undoubtedly the evangelical consciousness, like that of the Roman church, has hankered after the supernatural in the sense of a superior order of fact, discontinuous with the regular or natural order of experience, yet interpenetrating it here and there. The fancy prevails that, beyond the last fact that psychology can find in religious experiences, there are other facts, which are in the same series, yet of a different order. It is said that there are certain "elements" or "factors" or "forces" that the psychologist cannot reach. Here, in the gray unknown, the Divine Being is said to operate. It is as if someone should tell us that God is just over the horizon, but when we move in that direction we find the horizon moving too, so that what is just beyond the horizon always eludes us.

Any such theory of regeneration is not less dangerous to religion than it is obnoxious to psychology. It is dangerous to religion because it puts God into an equivocal position in our lives. For, on this theory, our assertions of fact cannot be controlled by reference to facts definitely ascertained and analyzed. This assumption of empirical facts which we cannot know as we know other facts has led unnumbered souls to chase after the experience of regeneration

as one might chase after a will-o'-the-wisp; and it has led to a sense of the unreality of religion that churches of the evangelical type are finding hard to understand or deal with. It is obnoxious to psychology because it plays fast and loose with facts. It asserts that certain mental processes occur, but when the psychologist asks what the processes are, and under what conditions they occur, he is told that they are totally beyond the reach of his science.

Under these circumstances, the psychologist's procedure is as follows: He assumes the usual scientific postulate of continuity or law, and proceeds to analyze the observable facts. Among the observable facts are those which are preached and interpreted as the experience of regeneration. These facts yield to analysis precisely as any other complex mental phenomena, so that the psychologist can explain them in the same sense in which he explains anything else. It is definitely ascertained that the experience popularly called conversion, which includes what theology calls regeneration, is determined in part by the religious environment, so that the phenomenon varies from sect to sect of Christians, and even with variations of instruction and custom within a given sect. Parallel experiences are found in other religions, as Buddhism, and in each case the content and direction of the change are determined by historical and environmental influences. The psychologist goes on to inquire how any such body of ideas becomes thus suddenly or profoundly effective in the individual. Social influences, taking the form of early training, and often of crowd suggestion, play an obvious part. The effect of such influences in different cases depends upon such facts as the condition of the nervous system as affected by age, the state of the health, or incidental circumstances like fatigue, or upon the permanent modes of functioning called temperament and suggestibility. The psychology of the subconscious adds its contribution to the understanding of some of the more obscure cases. Moreover, parallel transformations of a non-religious sort are discovered. Finally, it is shown that the experience in question has various degrees of suddenness, of emotional vividness, and of impulsive force, and that it is, in fact, continuous with the phenomena of religious growth.¹

¹ The continuity of the phenomenon with religious growth, its relation to the stages of general mental growth, and its psychological identity with abrupt mental

So much is already ascertained; if the psychologist should come across a case that cannot be explained by any of these principles, he would not, even then, admit its entire intractability to psychological analysis under the postulate of law. He would not, indeed, say that this or that fact is impossible; rather, he would redouble his energy in the presence of the mystery, confident that patient analysis will show the law-abiding relations of even the most unusual phenomenon.

Wise religious leaders and workers take advantage of the ascertained facts, perceiving that increased knowledge brings increased power to influence men. Unwise leaders and workers shun such knowledge, and as a consequence there is growing up a religious quackery parallel to the quackery that practices medicine but refuses to be guided by medical science.

Third. *What is the bearing of psychology upon the evidence for Christianity that is based upon the experience of regeneration?* The "argument from Christian experience" is intended to be an inductive proof of the validity of certain Christian dogmas, or of the general authority of the Christian religion. More specifically the evidence takes substantially the logical form of the experimental verification of an hypothesis. With general unanimity the writers who set forth this evidence fix upon regeneration as the crucial fact. Out of this fact various conclusions are drawn by various writers, but the typical conclusions concern the great doctrines of the person of Christ, the trinity, and the atonement. The limits of this article do not permit a detailed critique of apologetic literature of this kind, but only a general description of the class, and a somewhat specific reference to the latest example of it:²

changes of a non-religious sort, are proved by E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, London, 1900. The automatic character of the typical cases, and the influence of suggestion are treated by G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, New York, 1900. The apparently sudden maturing of a new character is explained by W. James, (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, 1902) as the uprush into consciousness of ideas, motives, etc., that had been subconsciously incubated. Finally, Morton Prince (*The Dissociation of a Personality*, New York, 1906) seems to have discovered a case in which the new state, of elevated emotion, etc., is first evoked by a set of definite ideas in a trance, and then carried over to the waking state but without recollection of these ideas. It is clear that the process differs from individual to individual, and that the factors are generally complicated. Direct suggestion may be predominant in one case, subconscious maturing in another, and in still others actual trance or hypnosis.

² For specimens of the class, see the following: L. F. Stearns, *The Evidence of*

Since the force of the argument depends upon allegations of fact, we have a right to expect these writers to scrutinize their data with the greatest care. The following questions, for example, are pertinent to any such investigation: (1) How many cases of the experience in question has the writer investigated? (2) What measures have been taken to secure universally representative facts, as distinguished from denominational types of experience? (3) What measures have been used for securing accuracy as to the facts, and particularly for eliminating the ordinary errors of memory, as also the errors of testimony arising out of prejudice, expectation, etc.? (4) Has adequate search been made for possible negative cases? (5) Have the negative cases been explained? (6) What are the relations of the experience here in question to the other experiences of the moral life?

If we are to have any reasonable assurance as to what the data really are, these questions must be answered. They do not ask for the impossible, or for anything more difficult than ordinary enterprises of psychologists. Yet every one of these reasonable requirements is commonly ignored in the argument from experience. It is doubtful if any one of them has been faithfully observed by any writer who has used the argument.

Indeed, what passes in these arguments as description of empirical data, and sometimes even claims to be "scientific" analysis, is ordinarily a mixture of facts (picked for the occasion), traditions as to Christian experience, and dogma. The whole is little more than a description of supposed experiences in terms of a preconceived theory. The experience of regeneration, with its concomitants, is painted in the highest colors, and the impression is given—sometimes the assertion is directly made—that this picture represents the universal experience of Christians.³ Instead of an empirical investigation of facts, we have *Christian Experience*, New York, 1891; R. S. Foster, *Philosophy of Christian Experience*, New York, 1891; F. H. Foster, *Christian Life and Theology*, Chicago, 1900; J. C. Granberry, *Experience the Crowning Evidence*, Nashville, 1900. To the same class belongs H. W. Clark, *The Philosophy of Christian Experience*, Chicago (no date), though its method of approach to its problems is different. Stearns gives on pp. 382-402 a short summary of the history of this type of apologetic. The latest example, above referred to, is an article by P. T. Forsyth; "The Distinctive Thing in Christian Experience," *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1908 (Vol. VI, No. 3, pp. 481-99).

³ Consider, for example, the statement that when a sinner accepts the divine call the result is "one and invariable, as all Christians will testify." See Stearns, p. 130. The description that follows this statement of Stearns goes into many details, each

in these cases an effort to determine the facts *a priori*. Hence it comes to pass that the central fact of the regeneration experience becomes marvelously fecund as the argument proceeds. Here the Christian is said to secure indubitable knowledge of the deity of Jesus, the atonement, even the resurrection of the body and eternal life. No one who makes the experiment is disappointed. These statements, taken directly from one writer,⁴ are typical of the ordinary mode of procedure.⁵ By "mode of procedure" is here meant only two things, the description of the facts, and the use made of them in the argument. It is not to be denied that, along with this uncritical procedure, there sometimes goes a deal of religious wisdom.⁶

There are signs that conservative theology is abandoning its old apologetic, which was essentially an effort to make past religious experience authority for the present religious life. Instead of the authority of history we are now offered the authority of a present superlative in its kind, and then declares that this new life is supernatural, and a miracle. See pp. 139-41.

⁴ Stearns, pp. 144, 147-50, 151. This writer declares that no one who makes the experiment is disappointed (p. 211), but this position of his necessitates the declaration that even Christians (known to be such by their fruits) who declare that they have little "assurance" really have much (p. 193).

⁵ F. H. Foster is, on the whole, more cautious than the other writers who have been named. Regeneration, on its human side, he says, is "the permanent choice of duty as such" (p. 21), and this is a fact of immediate consciousness. How a permanent choice could be a fact of immediate consciousness is not clear, nor is it clear that the Christian choice is a choice of so abstract a thing as "duty as such." Out of the fact as thus stated, however, Foster draws the traditional "plan of salvation."

⁶ The extravagant praise that has been given to Clark's *Philosophy of Christian Experience* must have been called forth by its style, its atmosphere, and its practical wisdom rather than its thought-structure. For here, once more, we have an effort to exhibit the traditional idea of the Christian revelation as known and established in the experience of the new life, but a slipshod and irresponsible analysis of the crucial facts upon which the whole thought-structure of the book rests. For example, in the face of any possible philosophy of history, Clark declares that "all dealing with human life, all suggestion for its future, all systematizing of its programs, has to start from the admitted fact that somehow human life has failed" (p. 21). His description of faith asserts that "faith must be the actual movement of man's whole personality to identify itself with, and lose itself in, the personality of Christ" (p. 159). "A vital belief makes exchange of personalities with Christ" (p. 195). The result of such faith is that those who have it "put themselves beyond all experimentings and past all uncertainties, and may know themselves to be on the straight road" (p. 133). "Qualities of mind and heart and character are given—in most absolute truth and reality given" (p. 161).

Christian experience. This shifting of the base will ultimately result, if the movement is thoroughgoing, in the rejuvenation of orthodoxy. Its theology will come near to real life. The liberal has been charging the conservative with clinging to theories against facts and with hanging his faith upon the past; the conservative now comes back with the retort, "Very well, let us look at real life, and see which theory, yours or mine, is in closer accord with the present facts." The contest will be interesting from many points of view, and not least from that of psychology. For now at last there is reason to hope that fidelity to psychological facts will come to be recognized as a virtue in theology and in preaching.

It is not unnatural, however, that the first essays of conservative theology in this direction should betray some lack of familiarity with psychological technique. In the firm confidence that practice will remedy the difficulty, let us notice a recent vigorous and thought-provoking article of Principal Forsyth.⁷ With admirable courage he faces the issue between conservatism and liberalism, neither ignoring nor belittling the contrast, nor hoping for reconciliation. "We find our charter in history," he says, "and not in human nature; in the Word, and not the world. The seat of revelation is in the cross, and not in the heart. The precious thing is something given, and not evolved. Our best goodness is presented to us rather than achieved by us. The Kingdom of God is not a final goal, but an initial boon. . . . The gospel stands with the predominance of intervention, and it falls with the predominance of evolution. . . Grace is essentially miraculous."⁸ This position, he holds, is made good by the Christian's present experience of Christ, or rather, by the Christian's faith, for we are told, "We know him by faith to be much more than he has ever been to our experience."⁹

Apparently we have here two stages of knowledge, both attained in the Christian experience, but one of them transcending the experience and here called faith. The experience here referred to, it is perhaps needless to say, is that of regeneration. According to Principal Forsyth, regeneration is experienced as a "causal creative action" of Christ, in which the believer's inmost being meets "with

⁷ *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. VI, No. 3, pp. 481-99.

⁸ P. 486.

⁹ P. 494.

Christ in his act on the Cross."¹⁰ This experience yields the highest degree of certainty as to the believer's own relation to Christ. But beyond this, the believer also knows "him, and the Church knows him, as a person of infinite power to create fresh experience of himself," so that an individual experience yields an absolute truth, and in one's own salvation the salvation of the world is assured.¹¹ This larger assurance is the "knowing by faith" that has been referred to. This faith is also an experience, for it includes a sense that itself as an act "is not perfectly spontaneous but evoked, nay, created, by its content. . . . It is the sense that it is created by another and parent act—which is the one eternal decisive act of an eternal person saving a world. I am forgiven and saved by an act which saves the world."¹² Thus a way is found, as so often before, for claiming that the truth of a historically evolved dogma is directly revealed in present experience.

The article from which these remarkable citations are made is entitled, "The Distinctive Thing in Christian Experience." The distinctive thing here referred to is apparently the Christian's supposed experience of Christ's universal redemptive act upon the cross. This is as much as to say that the distinctive thing in Christian experience is that it fixes a dogma upon the mind. The dogma in question may be true enough, and it is entirely conceivable that it might receive logical support by inferences drawn from the facts of Christian experience. But are the facts of this experience correctly described in the passages just cited? The answer lies on the surface: We have here an effort to establish historical facts by a present experience of them, and to establish a broad generalization by a single one of its particulars. Once more, a system of doctrine has been read into Christian experience. The procedure is *a priori*, and the facts on which reliance is placed are distorted almost beyond recognition.

What, then, does psychology permit us to believe in respect to regeneration? First, it permits us to believe anything whatever as to

¹⁰ P. 492.

¹¹ Pp. 494, 495.

¹² P. 495. One minor sign of the lack of psychological technique in the passage from which the above citation is made is the confused use of elementary psychological terms in the following sentence: "It is not an afferent, but an efferent consciousness, as the psychologists would say, like the muscular sense, the sense not of rheumatism, but of energy."

the character of God; anything whatever as to the significance of the life and death of Jesus for the consciousness of God; anything whatever as to a state of helplessness that man would be in if God's disposition toward him were different from what it is; anything whatever as to the ultimate source of human goodness. It permits any hypothesis as to the power of Jesus to transform a human soul, and the only function of psychology with respect to such hypotheses is to see that the facts of mind therein involved are correctly described and related to one another and to their contemporary and historical conditions. It permits belief in a mystical presence and operation of Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit provided only that this presence and these operations are not thought to be within the range of observation; if they are thought of as within the range of observation, then psychology steps in to see whether the facts are as they seem to be, to discover their antecedents, and to determine their place in this ordered and law-abiding universe of ours.

That the name of Jesus stands for a morally constructive power of the first rank no instructed person will deny. Here is the practical side of the doctrine of regeneration. But the doctrine does not stop with the merely practical; it goes on to say how the moral effects of the Christian religion are wrought, and it commonly claims that some of these effects are wrought by an act of Christ or the Holy Spirit that is separate from the historical order. Here is where the difficulty in adjusting the doctrine of regeneration with psychology is most acute. At present the problem takes this form: Does the Christian become acquainted with Jesus Christ otherwise than through the historic process (the Scriptures, the church, etc.)? No psychology would deny that Jesus is operative in the lives of men today in the same sense in which Washington and Lincoln and St. Paul still work within us. Nor would any psychologist draw from his science a denial that all these persons have survived bodily death, or that they are now taking an active part in the life of the universe. When, however, a claim is made that we can identify these present activities so as to say that this or that particular effect is wrought by a certain one of these persons, and otherwise than through the historical process, then the psychologist demands that the phenomenon in question be scrutinized.

There may be psychologists who hold that, even if a disembodied spirit were to return to us, we could not know the fact or identify the individual. Certainly most psychologists exclude such questions from psychological inquiry. But there appears to be no inherent necessity for supposing that the conditions of the recognition of one another change at death. Just as our present studies of sensation, memory, etc., record the reactions of A, B, and C as three "subjects," so it is conceivable that further phenomena of the same kind, recorded by laboratory instruments in the same way, might be set down to three disembodied subjects. That we might discern the personal presence of Jesus Christ is therefore not to be condemned as a psychological impossibility. The difficulty in the matter is no such *a priori* dictum as this would imply, but rather the exceedingly unsatisfactory evidence for the alleged fact. Indeed, nothing is more common among believers themselves than the assertion that the experience in question is beyond the reach of regulated observation. The proper inference from this is that a value has been confused with fact, or, more specifically, that a theory for interpreting a value has been taken to be a fact of experience.

Those who insist that they know Jesus otherwise than through the historic process inevitably place themselves upon the psychological plane of spiritism. Not a few Christian ministers see that this is the logic of their position, and therefore they show increasing sympathy toward beliefs which the ministry of twenty years ago branded as superstitious. If this tendency should spread, one almost inevitable result would be to make it more and more difficult for scientific men to find standing room within the Christianity of the church. If we were investing money, rather than defending a dogma, there can be little doubt that we would invest under the guidance of the scientific intellect rather than under the guidance of a tradition which, when hard pressed for its facts, forms an alliance with spiritism.

But why should Christian theologians permit such an issue as this to arise? Is it really true that, after nineteen centuries of Christian history, the moral power of Jesus needs to be defended by the most doubtful psychology? Or, have some men merely failed to see the woods because of the trees?